

Queen Hatshepsut

Divine Rulers

Because Egyptian pharaohs were considered **divine**, it was important for them to find divine wives. Since the only other divine beings in Egypt were in the royal family, pharaohs often married their sisters. One such sister and wife of a pharaoh was **Hatshepsut**. She, however, broke with tradition when her husband died and ruled as pharaoh in the place of her stepson, Thutmose III. She took on the official title "she who embraces Amun, the foremost of women."



This statue of Hatshepsut at her mortuary temple shows her wearing a ceremonial false beard.

The Pharaoh Queen

Throughout Egyptian history, many of the pharaohs' queens **wielded** equal power with their husbands, but none had been able to **seize** the throne and become pharaoh themselves. Not only was Hatshepsut the first woman to become pharaoh, but she was also the most successful until Cleopatra 1,400 years later.

Hatshepsut is known for her building program that included a huge and beautiful terraced **mortuary temple** at Deir-el-Bahri. Unlike most temples, it is open to the sun so that a visitor can study the 190 statues and carvings in the full light of day.

Hatshepsut is also famous for restoring Egypt to its former wealth by renewing foreign **commerce**.

For example, in the ninth year of her reign, she sent five large cargo ships on a trading expedition to the land of Punt.

Hatshepsut proved to be an able ruler for about 20 years. By avoiding war where she could, she gave Egypt a breathing space in which it could recover its strength. Yet her position on the throne was not secure. As a woman, Egyptian law said that she technically could not rule as pharaoh. She tried to encourage her people to believe that she was a legitimate pharaoh by disguising her gender. She adopted the **ceremonial** false beard and masculine dress of male pharaohs. In some of her **inscriptions** she even calls herself "His Majesty."

Thutmose III

Her stepson, Thutmose III, had been declared pharaoh before Hatshepsut seized the throne. As he grew into manhood, his impatience and resentment toward the strong-willed woman increased. Finally, he gathered the supporters that he needed and overthrew the queen. We do not know the details of this event, but it is likely that Hatshepsut was killed as a result.

Thutmose III tried to undo all that his stepmother had accomplished. He abandoned peaceful relations with neighboring countries and launched attacks into Nubia and Palestine. He also destroyed Hatshepsut's statues and erased her name from all the temples and monuments that she had constructed during her reign.



Thutmose III

Name: _____ Date: _____

Knowledge Check

Matching

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. seize | a. the exchange or buying and selling of items on a large scale |
| _____ 2. mortuary temple | b. to capture by using force |
| _____ 3. divine | c. to use power or influence |
| _____ 4. commerce | d. the wording on a monument or in a book |
| _____ 5. wield | e. to be like a god |
| _____ 6. inscription | f. the system of rules to be observed at a formal or religious occasion |
| _____ 7. ceremonial | g. a place set aside for the worship of a deceased pharaoh |

Multiple Choice

8. How long did Hatshepsut rule?
- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| a. about 20 years | b. about 25 years |
| c. about 30 years | d. about 35 years |
9. Who was the stepson of Hatshepsut?
- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| a. Deir-el-Bahri | b. Thutmose V |
| c. Amun | d. Thutmose III |
10. What is remarkable about Deir-el-Bahri?
- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. It is open to the sun. | b. It was open all night. |
| c. It is closed to the sun. | d. It was very small. |

Critical Thinking

11. What conclusions can you draw about Hatshepsut's personality? Support your answer with examples or details from the reading selection.
